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LETTER DATED 11 OCTOBER 1996 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

The Dayton/Paris Agreement explicitly calls for the right and opportunity for the return of refugees and displaced persons to their homes. This is an essential provision without which the Dayton/Paris Agreement cannot be sustained.

In the village of Uzici, in the Republika Srpska entity of Bosnia and Herzegovina, in order to avoid potential incidents, a small group of Bosnian refugees and displaced persons has begun now to work closely with the Implementation Force (IFOR) in coordinating their return home. Unfortunately, this coordination has not assured their personal safety or the security of their homes.

Early this morning, at least five of the newly rebuilt refugee homes were detonated and destroyed and several residents were imprisoned by Serbian paramilitary police. More tellingly, similar incidents in an obviously pre-arranged operation occurred in several other villages recently returned to by refugees and displaced persons. The message is clear: with or without IFOR's coordination and protection, non-Serbs are not welcome to return to the Republika Srpska.

The spokesman for the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in Sarajevo, Kris Janowski, said one of the houses destroyed had been rebuilt by his agency as part of an agreement signed with the Republika Srpska entity authorities. He said, "we are quite concerned about it. It is a threat to our agreement and the return [of refugees and displaced persons] to the zone of separation." He also said that Serb propaganda had spoken of refugees "occupying" Serb villages and that it was "not a huge jump to the conclusion that it was a way of disinviting" the returnees to that area.

This is the most serious threat to the integrity of the Dayton/Paris Agreement and challenge to IFOR since the peace process was consummated. Bosnian refugees and displaced persons have been encouraged by our Government to coordinate their return with IFOR to avoid misunderstandings or incidents. We have even proposed that ethnically mixed police, all residents of Republika

Srpska, under the authority of the Republika Srpska entity, be stationed in these refugee villages. Unfortunately, this has not met with the goodwill and good faith commitment to the peace agreements that one might expect.

Now it is up to IFOR and the international community to show why refugees and displaced persons should have any faith in working with these internationally mandated forces and authorities regarding their return. Otherwise, we fear that either refugees will not dare return or more deadly incidents and obstructions will occur.

We look forward to all Bosnian displaced persons and refugees returning to their homes. While pressure may mount in some countries for refugees to return to our country, a failure to protect the practical opportunity to return could not be reconciled with such pressure.

We request that the Council urgently consider this most serious threat to the peace agreement and call upon all concerned, including IFOR, to maintain their commitments.

May I ask for your kind assistance in circulating this letter as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Muhamed SACIRBEY
Ambassador
Permanent Representative
Special Envoy

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